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ABSTRACT

Collegiality can effectively address complex schoolwide problems requiring shared expertise or cohesive schoolwide action for resolution, but traditional teacher autonomy may inhibit such collegiality. Two New Zealand schools used collegial processes to develop solutions to schoolwide problems. Forest High was worried that staff failure to meet parental expectations about homework contributed to declining enrollment. Midway Elementary was developing schoolwide procedures for monitoring student achievement. Researchers interviewed the schools' principals and staff, audiotaped meetings, and analyzed relevant documents. The results found differences in problem-solving success stemmed from differences in how the schools integrated collegial processes with responsibility for the quality of problem solving processes and outcome. Though Forest High management believed that involvement in decision making was sufficient to ensure solution adequacy, the high value placed on professional autonomy created a disconnection between development of the solution and requirements for implementation. Consequently, the homework problem was not adequately solved. At Midway Elementary, the principal's requirement that the problem be solved limited professional autonomy. Staff took responsibility for solving the whole problem, not just developing an assessment scheme in isolation from other aspects of their professional lives. Midway's successful problem solving was related to the task-focused collegial process. (Contains 24 references.) (SM)

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Collegiality in Schools:

Its Nature and Implications for Problem-solving

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Collegiality in Schools:

Its Nature and Implications for Problem-solving

Site-based management, while providing flexibility and new opportunities for innovation in schools, also provides new challenges to solve a variety of problems that were previously the responsibility of national and regional government agencies. To meet these challenges, however, schools need to develop problem-solving processes that realise the potential benefits of bringing decision-making and problem-solving closer to those charged with implementation. One such process advocated widely in the literature is to develop greater collegiality in the professional culture, thus ensuring increased interaction and consensus decision-making (Fullan, 1993; Wallace, 1989; Weick & McDaniel, 1989).

The assumption that collegiality is necessarily associated with improved problem-solving, however, is increasingly being questioned. Some writers claim that teachers do not have the time to collaborate and so prioritise more immediate tasks over collaborative planning (Bush, 1995; Hargreaves, 1991; Little, 1990). Others suggest that collegiality is limited when teachers have insufficient knowledge of either the curriculum or the collegial role to engage in an effective process (Firestone, 1996; Hargreaves, 1984; Wehlage, Smith & Lipman, 1992). The tensions that potentially exist between collegiality and traditional hierarchical control are also recognised, but the virtual absence of case studies has resulted in little data being available on how these matters are resolved 'on the ground' in schools (Bush, 1995; Campbell & Southworth, 1992). In this paper, we examine the assumption that collegiality enhances school-based decision making and problem solving, first through a

conceptual analysis of the nature of collegiality and problem solving, then through two 'on the ground' case studies of schools engaging in collegial problem-solving.

We argue that collegiality can be effective in addressing complex problems that require shared expertise or cohesive school-wide action for their resolution. Collegial processes have the potential to increase the diversity of expertise and to develop cohesive problem understanding and resolution by those directly affected (Fullan, 1993; Little, 1990; Walker, 1987). This potential is only realised, however, when collegiality is integrated with a concept of responsibility for the quality of the problem-solving process and outcome.

There is a surprising absence of task-oriented analysis apparent in the literature on collegiality. Much of it reads as if the purpose of collegiality is simply to relate to one's colleagues - to work together - rather than to work together in the context of pursuing a task. Without a task focus, writers can ignore the persistent dilemmas that arise when task demands impinge on interpersonal processes. With the shift in focus to problem-solving comes a shift in criteria for judging an effective process. While the former emphasises sensitive collegial processes that engender feelings of caring and support, respect of individuals and a sense of family (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993) the latter requires processes that promote a quality problem solution while maintaining or even enhancing the quality of professional relations (Argyris, 1990).

Collegiality and Problem-Solving Effectiveness

Writers who make claims about the relationship between collegiality and the quality of decision-making and problem-solving need to address the fact that its different forms may either contribute to or inhibit problem-solving quality (Argyris,

1990). Giving support and helping others, for example, is often associated with collegiality (Newman, Rutter & Smith, 1989; Sirotnik, 1988). When support is interpreted as giving approval and praise to others, telling them what you believe they want to hear, and avoidance of threat or embarrassment, information that is crucial to quality problem-solving may be censored in the interest of being supportive of colleagues. For support to promote effective problem-solving, it needs to be defined in terms of increasing others' capacity to confront their own ideas and to articulate their unsurfaced assumptions, biases, and fears.

Similarly, respecting others is often cited as an important attribute of collegiality. As Cunningham and Gresso (1993) describe, "Through collegiality, the team learns how to respect, appreciate, and foster the individual identities of group members" (p.44). Argyris' (1990) research demonstrates that in practice, this value is usually interpreted as deferring to other people and not confronting their reasoning and actions. If learning and problem-solving are to be enhanced through respecting others, then their capacity for self-reflection and self-examination must be enhanced.

The attributes of openness and honesty often ascribed to collegial groups, once again need to be defined in terms of encouraging participants to say what they know yet fear to say, if such openness is to contribute to the information available to problem solvers. When information is censored in deference to others, the quality of the information is inevitably impaired. We need a theory and a practice of collegiality that goes beyond "working together" to show the precise ways in which such working together enhances problem-solving.

Judgments about the effectiveness of particular interpersonal processes for solving organisational problems, require a theory of a problem and what it is to solve

it. While problems can be identified as gaps between current and desired states of affairs, their understanding and resolution requires a more sophisticated account of their properties. The account employed in this research is based on that of the philosopher of science Thomas Nickles, who defines a problem as "all the conditions or constraints on the solution (variously weighted) plus the demand that the solution (an object satisfying the constraints) be found" (1988, p. 54). Constraints are conditions which rule out or make problematic some possible solution which would otherwise be admissible. They do not define the set of permissible solution alternatives, but determine or constrain to a greater or lesser degree what counts as an admissible solution, thus establishing the criteria for a solution. The problem is solved by finding or constructing a solution which integrates the constraints taken as a set, rather than by maximising a favoured one or two, or by reaching a compromise between them all. In an organisational context, the solution is the new practice designed to meet the problem demand (Robinson, 1993).

For collegial interpersonal processes to result in better problem-solving, in Nickles (1988) terms, problem-solvers would need to be responsible for developing a set of relevant constraints that would, in fact meet the problem demand. This would require a group with the capacity for self-reflection and the ability to encourage others to say what they know about the nature of the constraints, the interrelationships between them and how they might be satisfied. If a school, for example, were to develop a homework policy because the staff and parents believed this would enhance the achievement of its students, the constraints would need to include both publicly acceptable espousals of what might constitute a good policy, such as regular setting and marking of homework, and those less acceptable constraints that might compete

with the public espousals, such as teachers' unwillingness to set and mark homework. If the latter type of constraints are omitted, then the policy and practices developed to meet the problem demand will be disconnected from the reality of implementation. The resulting partial or non-implementation, a well documented fate of many policy initiatives (Dale, Bowe, Harris, Loveys, Moore, Shilling, Sikes, Trevitt, & Valsecchi, 1990; Weiss & Cambone, 1994), arises through failure of policies to include such constraints in the constraint set, combined with the traditional autonomy of teachers to decide what happens in their classrooms.

Collegiality which promotes problem-solving quality, requires mutual disclosure, testing and challenging of assumptions about the nature of problems and how to solve them. The traditional autonomy of teachers is a powerful obstacle to the exercise of this type of collegiality. While teachers need sufficient autonomy to exercise appropriate professional judgement if they are to be effective, this same autonomy may interfere with the adequacy of collegial problem-solving, when autonomy is interpreted as the "perceived right to make choices which concern both means and ends" (Kerr & Von Glinow, 1977, p.332) . If autonomy is valued over collegiality, then an individual may choose if or when to participate in the problem-solving process, or whether they will test their own or others' assumptions about appropriate constraints and how they might be satisfied. Perhaps most importantly, they may choose the extent to which they will be bound by collegial solutions.

In our view, a task-focussed account of collegiality requires that autonomy be limited by the need to act in ways that enhance problem-solving effectiveness. We disagree with Hargreaves (1991) who is critical of what he refers to as 'contrived collegiality' that is guided and controlled by others. His objection is that such control

undermines teacher empowerment and the exercise of discretionary judgement. We suggest that collegiality that delivers quality problem solutions should limit teacher discretion in the sense that any teacher's judgement about relevant constraints and how they may be satisfied, is subject to the scrutiny of colleagues. Without such accountability to colleagues, the school as a whole would be unable to develop cohesive policy or practice. If an organisation, such as a school, is to have the required level of cohesion, then individual teacher autonomy is inevitably constrained by the interpersonal processes required to achieve quality problem-solving.

The relationship between collegiality, with and without a task focus, and problem-solving effectiveness was the focus of our analysis of the problem-solving process in the two case study schools. Both used collegial processes to develop and implement a solution to a school-wide problem. In one school, Forest High, the problem-solving processes were disconnected from issues of solution quality because the school management believed that involvement in decision-making was sufficient to ensure solution adequacy. Staff were accountable to the extent they were required to be part of the process, but the high value placed on professional autonomy resulted in a disconnection between the development of the problem solution and requirements for implementation.

The staff at Midway Elementary School were also required to be part of the problem-solving process, but professional autonomy was limited by the demand that the problem be solved. They were accountable to each other and the senior management for developing an adequate constraint set and the procedures compatible with satisfying it.

The Case Studies

The flexibility and challenge of site-based management has been a reality in New Zealand schools since administration reforms were enacted in 1989 (Education Act, 1989). Under the governance of primarily elected community representatives on each schools' Board of Trustees, the professional staff have considerable operational autonomy. The two schools were part of a larger study on organisational learning of six New Zealand primary and secondary schools and were selected because they experienced different degrees of success in their problem-solving efforts. The principal of each of the three participating schools nominated an organisational problem that had been a major focus during the previous year and would continue to be so in the coming year. At Forest High, staff were concerned that their failure to meet parental expectations about setting and marking homework was contributing to a dramatically falling roll. The staff of Midway Elementary School were developing school-wide procedures for monitoring student achievement, to give them more information on programme effectiveness.

The methodology employed is directly related to the earlier account of Nickles' (1988) theory of a problem. It is problem-based (Robinson, 1993), that is, it explains the presence (or absence) of organisational practices by reconstructing the constraints which ruled them in or out. In other words, practices are explained by retrospectively reconstructing the problem for which they are the solution. A constraint analysis, such as that presented in Figure 1, is an attribution about the constraints to which practitioners must have been responsive.

Specific data collection and analysis methods, as opposed to methodology, included interviews with the principals, senior staff and a sample of teachers at each

of the schools, audio tape and transcriptions of meetings relevant to the nominated problem and analysis of relevant documents (see Table 1). At Forest High, students' homework diaries were analysed for number of entries and teachers' signatures six months after their introduction.

Table 1

Data collection methods

School	Interviews	Meetings	Documents
Forest High	Principal/senior management (5) Other staff (8) Board of Trustees members (2) Feedback to senior staff (2)	Staff meetings (1) Task group meetings (3) Combined senior management & task group meetings (3)	Homework policy Survey of students about homework Survey of staff about consistency of staff implementation of key functions of role of form teacher Education Review Office Audit Report Student homework diaries (60) Senior management Staff's statement to teaching staff on non-implementation of collegially made decisions
Midway	Principal/senior management (4) Other staff (3) Boards of Trustees member Feedback to senior staff	Staff	Education Review Office Assurance Audit Report Personnel management statement Maths & reading assessment scheme Computer generated data on written language

Homework at Forest High

Forest High, located in a middle income suburb, had a predominantly European population. The number of enrolled students had declined dramatically in

the previous five years because many of the school's liberal values were not shared by the community. Developing a school-wide homework policy was one of a number of initiatives aimed at reversing the roll trend. Staff hoped that such a policy would enhance the academic image of the school, satisfy parents, and be consistent with the staff's values of good educational practice (Figure 1).

Inconsistent homework practices throughout the school stemmed partly from ambivalence among some staff about the worth of enforced homework. For example, the principal expressed the opinion that enforcing homework can result in the creation of a great deal of stress at home between parents and students when the 'kids won't do it'. Time available for students to complete homework was another concern, as one staff member described:

> *There are always two sides, the first group says it's a time management problem of the students, the other group say they are being overloaded.*

The contradictory messages staff conveyed to students about homework left some staff feeling undermined in their efforts to set and enforce homework.

> *People don't always follow up on homework. It makes it difficult for other people. Some staff don't follow through, it puts more on strain those who do. I think it's important for the kids to learn that school doesn't finish at 3:15.*

Figure 1

The theory of practice for developing a homework policy at Forest High

Problem demand:

To develop a school-wide homework policy that:

Espoused constraints:

Meets staff's values of good educational practice	Enhances the academic image of the school	Satisfies parents	Gains collegial commitment of all staff

Theory-in-use constraints:

Does not increase staff workloads	Retains good relationships between staff and students	Retains staff autonomy

Strategies:

Task group develops draft policy and recommends practice • regular setting & marking of homework • homework diaries for years 9, 10, 11 • homework detentions for repeat non-compliers.	Draft guidelines approved by whole staff	Staff make independent decisions about implementation

Consequences:

Few staff implement new policy	No change in homework practices	Few students on detention

The task of developing a new policy was delegated to a task group of volunteers who surveyed staff, students and parents, and presented a draft policy to the whole staff for discussion. The task group formulated a summary statement of the problem as they perceived it:

> *At present this school does not have a clear policy or consistent practice related to homework. This situation contributes to the image of the school as not having an academic emphasis and so to lower third form enrolments.*

The task group's recommendations for the introduction of homework diaries for Years 9 and 10 (the youngest students in the school) were not only accepted by the whole staff, but extended to cover Year 11 as well. Subject teachers agreed to set a minimum number of hours of homework per week, to ensure that homework was entered into the diaries, and to check and sign the diaries weekly. An after-school detention system, (framed as an opportunity to complete homework) was instituted for repeat non-compliers. The only concern raised by staff at this time was the possibility of high numbers of students on detention until expectations were established that homework was compulsory.

Despite talk of evaluation of the new homework policy, none was carried out by school staff. On the initiative of the first author, the diaries from four classes were checked six months after their introduction. There were far fewer diary entries than the amount of homework agreed to in the policy, and teachers' signatures were rare. The task group met to discuss these findings with the senior management. One person reacted to the data in the following way:

Senior management staff: *There are other conclusions you could draw from your data, and one is that people aren't giving students homework.*

Researcher: *Which was the original complaint of parents.*

Task group member: *I checked mine today ... A lot of my third formers said that to me. They said "Well, I can't fill it out, 'cause I don't have homework given very often." And he's a good kid too.*

Subsequent interviews confirmed the accuracy of this interpretation. Non-implementation of the policy could not be construed as active resistance on the part of staff to an unpopular decision since staff continued to endorse the policy as being educationally sound. Rather, two key constraints guided their actions. Setting and marking homework increased their workload and had the potential to disrupt their relationships with students. Early attempts on the part of some staff to introduce homework were resisted by students who wrote their objections:

Student 1: *We have 6 hours of school. Isnt thate [sic] enough!!!*

Student 2: *I feel like a baby, I thought at high school you treated us like adults. Don't you trust us?*

As a result of the research, the senior management team decided to examine further the issue of non-implementation of agreed decisions. A survey of staff on another collegially-made decision of concern revealed 100% agreement that staff were inconsistent in its implementation. In accordance with a collegial problem-solving

process, they circulated a statement for staff discussion, summarising the tensions between collegiality, autonomy and accountability.

> *... we are all committed to the importance of the responsible and autonomous professional and ... this needs to be balanced against our collective responsibility to each other. It is sometimes felt that through our commitment to autonomy, independence, valuing the individual etc. we can sometimes seem not to be taking appropriate collective action on some issues. So we may have to give up some of our autonomy because we've reached a decision together.*
>
> *It is also sometimes felt that our ethos of caring for and valuing each other means that we don't respond appropriately when an individual or group fails to fulfil their responsibility to other individuals or to the school as a whole. There is general staff concern about action that should be taken when a teacher fails to carry out her/his responsibilities to the school and to each other. For instance, when we have agreed together on action to be taken as a whole staff eg the implementation of a clearer policy on homework, what can we do if someone is undermining our collective decision by failing to follow the guidelines we have agreed to?*

The only recommendation offered by staff and accepted by the senior management, was that that they should remind staff more often about doing what they had agreed to do. Rather than hold staff responsible for the quality of the decision and its implementation, senior management were held responsible for reminding staff with sufficient frequency for them to act appropriately.

Senior management were reluctant to engage in stronger measures for two reasons. Firstly, non-implementation was inconsistent with their personal theories about collegiality and consensus decision-making, which assumed that staff would be committed to collegially made decisions. Maintaining this belief in the face of contradictory data is consistent with the position taken by Bush (1995), who argues that adherents to theories of collegiality take a strong normative stand on what ought to be, rather than describing the evidence of practice. Secondly, the senior management construed possibilities for making staff more accountable in such extreme and negative terms that they felt unable to implement them. As one stated, "You can't sack somebody" for this type of non-implementation. No possibilities between reminders and dismissal were considered.

In an environment of autonomy, staff engaged in a collegial process focusing on 'what ought to be' without consideration of the problem in the context of their working lives. From past experience they knew that implementation would be optional. They did not, therefore, need to hold each other to account for articulating all the relevant constraints, or to test each others' assumptions about the interrelationship between them. Issues such as how the homework policy would impact on their workload and how compulsory homework may impact on their relationships with students were never raised. Most important, the disconnection between public commitment and private non-implementation was never discussed, even though subsequent interviews established that staff were aware of this disconnection. Raising such an issue had the potential to make them both more responsible for their problem solutions, and require them to engage in problem solving processes antithetical to collegiality as it is usually defined. When caring and

support of colleagues is defined as giving approval and praise to others (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993), confronting colleagues about not implementing agreed decisions, becomes a stressful process with a high potential for conflict. With little investment in the problem solution, staff were able to give high levels of approval to their colleagues who had taken the time to develop the homework policy with little cost to themselves. When staff's failure to implement the policy came into the public forum as a result of the research, the issue was phrased by management as a question for collegial discussion. The answer they received was to make management responsible for reminding staff to act. As a result, no change was evident in the homework practices at the school.

School-wide assessment at Midway

Midway School was a large primary school on the fringes of the city and until recently enjoyed a rural and somewhat bohemian atmosphere which was being eroded by improved transportation to the city and an expanding commuter population. Their nominated problem, school-wide monitoring of student achievement, arose from a report on the school from the national audit and review agency, the Education Review Office, challenging them to upgrade their monitoring and reporting systems. The principal agreed with the view that whole school assessment schemes were needed to judge program effectiveness, and that such judgements should be backed up by publicly available evidence.

In comparison with Forest High, there was greater dissent among the staff about the desirability of this initiative. Not all were convinced that the previous assessment system was inadequate, and some were apprehensive about uses to which

the data might be put. In addition, they were concerned that a greater emphasis on assessment would detract from the quality of their teaching. With these concerns in mind, its use for teacher appraisal was publicly ruled out, and a major constraint on the new scheme was that it met multiple requirements with maximum efficiency so that it would not detract from teaching quality (Figure 2). The principal expressed it this way:

> *This was our argument - it has to be useful for teachers in their individual relationships with their children. And then we had to frame it in a way that we were then able to take all that individual information and use it collectively. The prerequisite right at the very beginning was that we didn't have to add in another system to produce this information.*

As at Forest High, the principal used collegial processes to develop the scheme, although the design of these processes differed, in that he required all staff to be involved in all stages of development. Beyond this requirement, the process was teacher-led because the principal believed that his staff knew more about the curriculum than he did. Staff volunteered for one of five curriculum groups responsible for drafting a set of learning objectives and assessment tools. The teachers laboured long and hard over determining exactly what it was that they wanted children to learn; once that was determined, the design of assessment tools was not as difficult as they had first imagined. All groups presented their draft schemes to the whole staff, who agreed to their adoption, usually after considerable revision as a

Figure 2

The theory of practice for developing school-wide assessment at Midway

Problem Demand

To develop a school-wide assessment system that:

Espoused and theory-in-use constraints

Provides reliable information for • reporting to parents • classroom use • external accountability	Is practical and efficient	Improves rather than reduces teaching quality	Gains staff commitment and ownership

Strategies

Task groups formed for 5 curriculum areas	Draft guidelines approved by whole staff	Show respect for dissenters and adjust system to meet objections	Prioritise classroom use

Consequences

Assessment plans and procedures begin to be used in 5 areas	A school-wide language for assessment and reporting develops	Staff report both positive benefits and development costs	Dissenters continue to both raise concerns and lead staff groups for ongoing development

result of feedback. Alongside this curriculum task, administrative procedures had to be developed for the collection and computerised analysis and reporting of the data.

The development process was incomplete when we finished our research but we judged the problem-solving process to be more effective than at Forest High. Within the space of one year, the staff had produced draft assessment schemes in five curriculum areas, some of which had been trialed in classrooms and the results discussed at syndicate (age level) meetings. As a result of intensive discussion about the desirability of school-wide assessment, and of their detailed planning, staff reported that they were now using a shared language to describe the achievements of their children, so that joint planning was easier, and transferring information between class levels smoother. Technical problems with the hardware and software had delayed the availability of school-wide information for external reporting purposes, and it was still too early to tell whether ready availability of data on children's learning would improve the quality of teaching at Midway School.

One difference between Midway and Forest High was that the reality of developing a practical solution that simultaneously met the assessment problem demand while not creating new problems was constantly in front of Midway staff as they developed the assessment procedures. The constraints were developed in terms of their interrelationship with other tasks central to the role of teachers, in particular, how this new assessment system would impact on their ability to teach. The Deputy Principal expressed her concern about this issue in an interview.

> *It (school wide assessment) clarifies the aims and it means everybody is talking the same language, we're talking about exactly the same objectives,*

and if I'm talking about a 3B [on the assessment scheme] somebody else knows what that means, it was a bit vaguer before. .... It streamlines your thinking but it also limits your thinking in a way because you think "Oh, it'd be really neat to find out how much wood really is in that tree", but you really can't diverge into that. It becomes a bit sterile to say "Right, this child is 3A in geometry". .... I hope we can have the streamlining, but allow for that other stuff to happen.

The Deputy Principal was not the only staff member ambivalent about the new assessment scheme. Others were even more critical initially, but became more committed as they worked on the task. Without the combination of collegial problem-solving and a strong task focus, it is unlikely this commitment would have developed. Paul expressed his initial objections as follows:

We are doing this without any greater pay, any greater acknowledgment and the only purpose is very much within ourselves, OK we're better teachers blah, blah, blah, but the Ministry's copping out on this, it's a political thing, and we're very much doing their work for them. This is a political statement - they refuse to pay us for it.

Despite Paul's objections, he volunteered to lead the written language curriculum group and had presented the draft proposal enthusiastically to the staff. When asked by the researcher how this came about, he replied:

What happens is you get fervently into it, you believe in it and you promote it to the other staff. It's happened for everyone. We had this, like a revival meeting. All the staff selling their thing, we felt very proud of ourselves and very serious about what we did and how we promoted it. If you want people to take it on board you get them to do it. If it comes from the grass roots, then they're going to be really effective at it. ....

Part of his commitment arose from an acknowledgment that the assessment system had led to improvements in teaching.

I think it's made us much more clear about what we teach and why we teach it. The assessment has become very much an integral part of what we do. There's a much greater clarity about what we are about in this school.

We have explained the problem-solving effectiveness of Midway by appealing to their task-focused collegial processes. An alternative explanation is that the principal used collegial processes to covertly manipulate staff into agreeing to develop the assessment scheme. Our inquiry did not substantiate this. The principal publicly required that the staff develop the scheme because such a development was nationally mandated. As a principal, he could not reasonably disregard this requirement but he knew that he could not meet it without the commitment of his staff. He made public that he wanted staff to formulate the solution to the problem because he respected their expertise and wanted their commitment. He also respected the staffs' concerns, and as far as possible, integrated their concerns into the solution. In addition, in

response to staff requests, they saw the data before anyone else, and their use of the data in classrooms was prioritised over other uses.

The principal also had the interpersonal skills to engage in a debate with his staff in ways that left those concerned feeling respected and reassured, while still confronting either their reasoning or his own. In interviews, we were repeatedly told of his ability to listen to alternative views. He explained how Paul came to be leader of the written language group:

Principal: *There are ... staff who are very, very professional people who have a philosophical objection to what's happening, and I understand their objection and we continue to debate that. They have a right to that, and I don't think that they'll actually change, yet one of those people, I can think of Paul, who has led the written language committee to the achievements it has, and he philosophically does not believe that we should be demonstrating [our effectiveness], because we are professional people, we should be able to get on and do the job.*

Researcher: *Okay, so how did he come to be the leader of the written language group?*

Principal: *We said to the staff - okay, we're going to do these five subjects, you nominate what you'd like to do, and out of that we worked through and then we said to the groups, "Who would like to lead the group?" and those people with strong philosophies like that tend to rise as leaders as well ...*

The professional autonomy so evident at Forest high played only a minor role in the problem-solving process at Midway. Staff exercised autonomy to the extent that they freely expressed their point of view throughout the discussions, and they had considerable freedom about how they used the assessment data in their own classrooms. Beyond this, they were bound by the collegially determined decisions and the requirement for an organisationally coherent solution.

Discussion and Conclusions

We have argued that the differential problem solving success experienced in the two schools can be attributed to the differences in the way the schools integrated collegial processes with a concept of responsiblity for the quality of the problem-solving process and outcome. The homework policy debate at Forest High focussed on the qualities of a good homework policy but was disconnected from responsibility for the adequacy of the problem solution. Staff debated what was educationally sound without disclosing the factors that they knew would prevent them from implementing what they espoused. Educational planning at Forest High had become disconnected from the realities of their own and their colleagues' practice. Consequently, the homework problem was not adequately solved. Midway staff, on the other hand, took responsibility for solving the assessment problem by publicly integrating their educational ideas with their knowledge of current realities, and adjusting the two in ways that would advance their practice without being idealist. They took responsibility for solving the whole problem, not just developing an assessment scheme in isolation from other aspects of their professional lives.

It could be argued that the differential problem-solving success of the two schools was attributable to different types of organisation typical of elementary and secondary schools, rather than to the greater task focus of the elementary school staff. Coherent change can be difficult to execute in large secondary schools with strong departmental structures and identity (Siskin, 1994). In the case of Forest High and Midway, this explanation has limited relevance because both were a similar size (500-600 students) and the departmental identity at Forest High was relatively weak because its small size meant that many teachers taught across departments. In addition, the school emphasised a "guidance centred" integrated structure, rather than strong subject division.

A second possible objection to our explanation is that the Midway principal was more authoritarian and/or manipulative than the principal at Forest High, and so was more successful in persuading his staff to engage in an adequate problem-solving process. We have provided data that indicated to us that he was not manipulative, but rather open in his negotiation with his staff. He was authoritarian to the extent that he required the problem to be solved in response to an external requirement that schools develop such assessment schemes. He also believed that such a scheme could lead to improved teaching and children's' learning. If principals who require their staff to respond to an external requirement are to be labelled 'authoritarian', then much of what happens in schools must inevitably fall outside the scope of collegial processes. We believe that it is a mistake to require negotiability of all problem constraints as a condition for collegiality. First, there are few problems which schools face, where staff are free to specify all the relevant constraints. Second, problems typically comprise multiple constraints, and the non-negotiability of one or two does not

eliminate all the degrees of freedom available on how a problem may be solved. One of the advantages of an adequately theorised concept of a problem is that it reveals the inadequacy of approaches which focus on the quality of negotiability of a single constraint.

There is an interesting parallel between much of the literature on collegiality and the difficulties that arose for Forest High in their problem solving efforts. As already noted, a task-oriented analysis is largely absent in the literature on collegiality, although one exception should be noted (Fullan, 1993). The focus of most of this literature has been on the qualities of working together (Campbell & Southworth, 1992), rather than on working together to solve a problem. At Forest High, the focus was similarly on interpersonal process, rather than on the quality of processes required to achieve an outcome. A satisfactory outcome was assumed because the process was collegial. Forest High management were able to articulate the tension between collegiality and autonomy when they became aware, as a result of the research, that staff did not take collective responsibility for solving the problem but rather chose their own individual solutions. They were not, however, able to resolve it. Similarly, the potential tension between collegiality and autonomy is recognised by many writers (Bush, 1995; Campbell & Southworth, 1992; Little, 1990; Smyth, 1996), but only Fullan (1993) describes they may be integrated. If site-based management is to make a difference to the quality of problem-solving in schools through bringing the decision-making closer to those charged with implementation, then research must focus on contextually-bound collegiality in the pursuit of particular tasks. Without such contextualisation, current accounts of collegiality will not deliver their promised improvement in site-based decision-making and problem-solving.

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